

القضاء والقدر

FAITH IN PREDESTINATION

(Qada Wa Qadar)

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INTRODUCTION

Belief in pre-destination (Qada wa Qadar) is an undisputed article of faith in Islam. For some people, this belief leads to contentment and satisfaction, even in the face of hardship and adversity. But for others, it provides justification for their wrongdoings: how often do we hear people arguing that they should not be blamed for their disobedience since it has already been decreed by Allâh that they will sin?

The following two articles in this booklet attempt to answer those people who genuinely wonder whether Man has any control over his actions in this life or whether he is forced to do everything that he does.

The first article was originally compiled in Arabic by Shaikh Muhammad Ibn Salih Al-Uthaimin, a renowned scholar from Saudi Arabia; the second was a reply by Mr. Adil Salahi to a question which appeared on the religious pages of the daily "Arab News" of Jeddah.

It is hoped that this booklet will help to clarify the difficult issue of pre-destination.

SUHAIB HASAN

PRE-DESTINATION AND THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN

In this article, we want to deal with an important matter that concerns all Muslims: decree and pre-destination by Allâh (Qada and Qadar), a subject which has been a point of contention for scholars throughout the ages. It has been reported that the Messenger of Allâh once found his Companions arguing about Qadar. He forbade them from indulging in such a debate and told them that communities before them had been destroyed for that reason.

However, by the grace of Allâh, our pious ancestors were able to understand the issue and form a moderate view based on equity and justice. In their understanding, the issue of Qada and Qadar stems from the Unity of Allâ's attribute of Cherishing (Tawhid ar-Rububiyah). This is one of three kinds of Allâh's Unity:

1. Unity of Divinity (Tawhid Al-Uluhiyah), which is to direct all forms of worship to Allâh alone .
2. Unity in the matter of Cherishing the whole universe (Tawhid ar-Rububiyah), which means to believe that all creation, sovereignty and planning belong to Allâh.
3. Unity in the matter of Allâh's names and attributes.

Faith in pre-estimation is implied by Allâh's attribute of nourishing and sustaining the whole universe. Imam Ahmad has said:

"Qadar (pre-estimation) is the power of Allâh. It is one of the secrets which no-one except Allâh knows, as it has been recorded in the well-guarded tablet. We do not know what Allâh has destined, either for or against us or concerning all his creation, except after the event has occurred or has been told by the Prophet himself."

Regarding this issue, the people of the Muslim Ummah have divided into three factions:

1. The first group is so extreme in its attempts to prove pre-estimation that it has completely deprived man of any power

and any ability to choose. For them, Man has no independence but is coerced into doing all that he does; he is a helpless being, at the mercy of Fate. There is no doubt that this group is wrong. By using our powers of reason and the tenets of our faith, we know that there is a difference between the things that happen without our will and those in which we play an active part.

2. The second group goes to the extreme of attributing complete power and freedom of choice to the individual, at the expense of denying Allâh any role in process, by saying that the Almighty does not know of an action until after it has occurred! This view is also mistaken.
3. Allâh has guided others to a more moderate and sensible view, and we, the people of the Sunnah and Jama'ah have adopted it because it is based on legal as well as rational evidence. We agree that everything that happens in this universe falls into one of these two categories:
 - a) The things that Allâh does and in which no-one else has any power of intervention, e.g. the falling of rain, the growth of vegetation, life and death, illness and health.
 - b) The actions done by all the creatures that have the power of will. These actions are a consequence of their efforts and their choice, a power that has been given to them by Allâh. He thus says in the Qur'an:

﴿لِمَن شَاءَ مِنْكُمْ أَن يَسْتَقِيمَ﴾

To whomever among you wills to go straight. (81:28)

﴿مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ﴾

Among you are some that desire this world and some that desire the Hereafter. (3:152)

Man knows very well the difference between what he does from his own free will and what he does because of external force. The person who reaches safely the bottom of a flight of stairs knows that this is because he walked down carefully. However, if he is

pushed down from the top, he has no power over how he lands at the bottom. The first instance is an example of choice; the second is clearly one of compulsion. Similarly, a person who suffers from incontinence of urine knows that the urine is passed without his will and that if he did not have this illness, he would be able to control the discharge. The difference between the two requires no further explanation.

It is a mercy of Allâh that there are certain actions which are in the voluntary power of the individual but are recorded as if they are not, and so he is not held answerable for them, e.g. actions done out of forgetfulness or during sleep. Allâh says in the story of the People of the Cave:

﴿وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ﴾

And We turned them on their right and on their left sides. (18:18)

The men themselves are turning over, but Allâh Almighty attributes their movements to Himself, since a sleeping person has no control over his action. The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said:

“The one who forgets while fasting and eats or drinks, he should complete his fast because Allâh is the One who feeds him and gives him the drink.”

Thus, actions done in a state of forgetfulness are also treated as if the person is acting outside his own will and are attributed to Allâh Himself.

If we were to agree with the first group mentioned earlier (those who give Man no free will whatsoever), we would be distorting the facts. We would not be able to praise someone for his good actions or castigate someone who voluntarily does wrong, because we would have attributed all their actions to the will of Allâh. Another dangerous implication of this argument is that the Almighty behaves unjustly if he punishes the disobedient and rewards the good, as He alone is the source of all these actions. Not only is such reasoning nonsensical, but contradictory to the Qur'an as well:

﴿وَقَالَ قَرِينُهُ هَذَا مَا لَدَىٰ عَتِيدٍ ۖ أَلْقِيَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ عَابِدٍ ۖ مِّنَاجٍ لِلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ ۖ مَّرِيٍّ ۖ الَّذِي جَعَلَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَأَلْقِيَاهُ فِي الْعَذَابِ الشَّدِيدِ ۖ﴾ قَالَ قَرِينُهُ رَبَّنَا مَا أَطْعِمْتُمُوهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ ۖ قَالَ لَا تَخْتَصِمُوا لَدَىٰ وَقَدْ قَدَمْتُ إِلَيْكُمْ بِالْوَعِيدِ ۖ مَا يُبَدِّلُ الْقَوْلَ لَدَىٰ وَمَا أَنَا بِظَالِمٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ ۖ﴾

And his companion (angel) will say: “Here is (this Record) ready with me!” (And it will be said): “Both of you throw (Order from Allâh to the two angels) into Hell, every stubborn disbeliever (in the Oneness of Allâh, in His Messengers, etc.). “Hinderer of good, transgressor, doubter. Who set up another *ilâh* (god) with Allâh, then (both of you) cast him in the severe torment.” His companion (Satan — devil) will say: “Our Lord! I did not push him to transgress, (in disbelief, oppression, and evil deeds) but he was himself in error far astray.” Allâh will say: “Dispute not in front of Me, I had already, in advance, sent you the threat. The Sentence that comes from Me cannot be changed, and I am not unjust (to the least) to the slaves. (50:23-29)

Almighty Allâh clearly states that the punishments He inflicts are not cruel but just, since He has already warned His creatures and sent them guidance. He has clearly defined the two paths of piety and disobedience, just as He has defined the consequences of following each path. Man thus has total freedom to choose either path, remembering that if he opts for the path of disobedience, he will not have the excuse of ignorance to offer Allâh on the Day of Judgement. The Qur'an says in this regard:

﴿رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا﴾

Messengers as bearers of good news as well as of warning in order that mankind should have no plea against Allâh after the Messengers. (4:165)

The Qur'an and reality also refute those who go to the other extreme of giving Man complete freedom of action, leaving no role for Allâh. We are told that the will of Man follows the will of Allâh: